

TPAG Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2022

Attendees: Mark Binnall; Joe Bellil; Connie Mellis, CMRPC; Sharon Strzalkowski; Nona Haroyan; Nancy Garr-Colzie; Mary Haroyan; Bill Clark, Worcester Yellow Cab; Dennis Lipka, WRTA Administrator; Rich K; Russell Andrews; Brian; Lynette Young; Pamela Alvin

Nomination of Officers included:

Executive Board – Joe Bellil, Mark Binnall, Nancy Garr-Colzie, Mary Haroyan, Mike Kennedy, Sharon Strzalkowski, (Nona Haroyan was nominated but declined the position)

Vice Chair – Kathy Kulesza

Chair – Mark Binnall

Election of officers will take place at the Oct meeting.

WRTA Administrator Dennis Lipka spoke to TPAG to discuss their concerns, give updates on service and answer questions.

- WRTA has hired Trillium to create a **new website**. They have experience with creating websites for other RTAs. The new website is expected to be user-friendly, convenient to riders, good for smartphone users. It will have better integration of the fixed route and paratransit services. The target date for completion is Jan 2023. TPAG members offered to help WRTA test the website for people who use screen readers and people who have low vision. This website can also improve communication and there may be an opportunity for a newsletter or regular updates.
- WRTA offers service to 20 of the **largest employers** in the area including hospitals and colleges. It may help to note that 73% of WRTA service is in Worcester. Ridership in calendar year 2022 is quickly approaching the pre-pandemic levels in calendar year 2019. WRTA has added service and modified service in the past year. Specifically, Sat ridership is about 75% of weekday ridership and Sun ridership has increased. Recent increases in gas prices have had little impact on ridership.
- WRTA is not focusing on **advertising** on vans since there is limited space on vans for advertising and there are different rules for advertising on vans vs buses. Electronic advertising is not suitable for vans. Bus wraps are not appropriate for vans.
- WRTA sends letters annually to all communities to notify them of the rider rep and disability rep positions on the **Advisory Board**. These positions are a challenge to fill. Currently the rider rep is from Leicester and the disability rep is from Worcester. Virtual meetings have increased attendance at meetings.
- **Via service** is offered in the Westborough and Shrewsbury areas. While ridership numbers are promising, the service is expensive to fund. WRTA is discussing ways to reduce costs by taking some of the functions in-house.

- There are no plans to modify paratransit service to something similar to Ride Flex service in Boston through the MBTA. Currently Worcester Yellow Cab is the **backup** to the van service when needed. There are no plans to change the scheduling software for paratransit service or offer same-day service.
- Currently WRTA has some **drivers** out on family medical leave which sometimes makes it difficult to operate both fixed route and paratransit service. We are looking at ways to increase the driver pool while this is happening. WRTA hopes for stability in drivers now that a new contract has been signed.
- We will discuss the issue of multiple **announcements** being made simultaneously at the Hub platform. It may be a software issue that can be corrected.
- When **fare collection** returns, WRTA will be using a new fare collection system through Masabi. This will be an account based system which will help WRTA to offer many options for riders.

Thank you Mr Lipka for attending our meeting and sharing information about WRTA service.

Next meeting is Oct 19. Meeting will be held virtually.